

A Concept of Contemplation in Kant's Aesthetics and Its Criticism in Contemporary Aesthetics

Valentina Hribar Sorčan

Faculty of Arts, Department of Philosophy,
University of Ljubljana

Aškerčeva 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia

e-mail: valentina.hribar-sorcan@guest.arnes.si

e-mail: Valentina.HribarSorcan@ff.uni-lj.si

Abstract:

The author critically deals, first, with a concept of contemplation in Kant's aesthetics, through an analysis of aesthetic and teleological judgments of nature. She argues that Kant was closer to a constitutive idea of nature (of its objective purposiveness) than to a regulative one, but he tried to avoid a danger of affirming it dogmatically. He also succeeded to overcome a narrow Enlightenment's intention to dominate nature. The very concept of contemplation assumes that, at least in the aesthetic and teleological field, Kant did not intend to interfere with nature, but only to contemplate it for its own sake. When we try to rethink his aesthetics of nature, we are more aware of historical aspects of human relationship towards nature, so there is no danger to relapse into immediacy from which Hegel warned us.

In the second part of the paper, the author examines a critique of Kant's concept of contemplation and disinterestedness in the aesthetics of engagement (Arnold Berleant) and in the everyday aesthetics (Katya Mandoki). She argues that they address their critique to Kant from an empirical perspective, while Kant tried to explain the conditions under which we could feel and make our (aesthetic) judgments from an epistemological, cognitive basis. Pleasure and displeasure are the general ways of feeling which do not exclude any other particular feelings. On the contrary, all feelings may participate in the aesthetic judgement. It is true that Kant did not expose the body, but he neither did exclude it; contemplation is not disembodied but oriented to the subjective and empirical experience. It is rooted in our faculties (understanding, imagination, perception, sensation). Thus, contemplation inevitably includes a context or situation of the subject who judges a natural object from the aesthetic point of view. It is not enough to say that we are engaged in aesthetic experience: first, philosophy has to understand and to explain, as Kant did, how our cognition comes to it.

Contemplation is a pure and disinterested judgement, due to the playful activity of our faculties - the understanding and the imagination, as a ground of subjective, empirical aesthetic experience. Thus, they are the condition of possibility of perception, (dis)pleasure (a basis of all feelings) and of bodily self-awareness, too, without thereby denying the object's affection of the subject.

Keywords: Aesthetics, Kant, Contemplation, Cognition, Nature, Aesthetics of engagement, Everyday aesthetics.

I.

In my paper I would like, first, to discuss Kant's understanding of the concept of contemplation in his aesthetics, in *Critique of Judgement*, especially in *Analytic of the Beautiful*. A notion of contemplation is used for the first time in paragraph §5, in which Kant explains: "The judgement of taste is simply contemplative, i.e., it is a judgement which is indifferent as to the existence of an object, and only decides how its character stands with the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. But not even is this contemplation itself directed to concepts; for the judgement of taste is not a cognitive judgement (neither a theoretical one nor a practical, and hence, also, is not grounded on concepts, nor yet intentionally directed to them)" (Kant 2007, §5, 41).

Contemplation means an act of regarding with calm or an act of considering with attention an object for which a subject judges to be beautiful. Kant treated the concept of beautiful from the point of view of the spectator who contemplates objects of nature and not from the point of view of the artist who creates his works of art. When a subject contemplates an object, he reflects on his own relation to the object and is not interested in its objective qualities, but in his subjective feelings of pleasure or displeasure. The beautiful is a subjective judgment of taste. The satisfaction that determines the judgment of taste must be without any interest, in order to guarantee its purity. "Everyone must allow that a judgement on the beautiful which is tinged with the slightest interest, is very partial and not a pure judgement of taste" (Kant, §2, 37). For this reason, the aesthetic satisfaction must not be connected to the agreeable or the good because they are combined with interest. If an object is agreeable for a subject, it means that its sensation excites a desire for it. That kind of "satisfaction presupposes not the mere judgment about it, hence we do not say of the agreeable that it *pleases*, but it *gratifies*" (Kant, §2, 38). Contemplation is a process of aesthetic perception and reflection of an object of nature and a source of the pure judgment of taste, without any interest. In the judgment of taste, we don't want to find out how an object pleases our senses in sensation, "but rather how we judge it on the basis of mere contemplation (intuition or reflection)" (Kant, §2, 36).

A notion of contemplation derives from a Latin word *contemplatio*, which was a translation of the ancient Greek term for *theory*. I would like to emphasize that in *Critique of Judgement* Kant, on the contrary, assumes that aesthetic contemplation must not arise from concepts. He declares that an aesthetic judgment is not a cognitive judgment; it only depends on subjective feelings of pleasure or displeasure. What kind of subjectivity do we speak about? A delight of taste in the beautiful is the one and only disinterested and free delight: "For, since the delight is not based on any inclination of the subject (or on any other deliberate interest), but the judging subject feels himself completely free in respect of the liking which he accords to the object, he can find as reason for his delight no personal conditions to which his own subjective self might alone be party" (Kant 2007, §6, 43). Kant's concept of subjectivity in the aesthetic judgement does not allow any possibility of subject's uniqueness, intimacy, and privacy, on the contrary, every subject must regard his delight "as resting on what he may also presuppose in every other person" (Kant 2007, §6, 43).

Even though Kant admits to aesthetic judgment being subjective and particular, he wants to get it closer to the ideal of universality and, therefore, the subject must judge such examples that he could “believe that he has reason for demanding similar delight from everyone. Accordingly he will speak of the beautiful as if beauty were a feature of the object and the judgement were logical (forming a cognition of the object by concepts of it); although it is only aesthetic, and contains merely a reference of the representation of the object to the subject; - because it still bears this resemblance to the logical judgement, that it may be presupposed to be valid for everyone. But this universality cannot spring from concepts. For from concepts there is no transition to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure” (Kant 2007, §6, 43). The ideal of universality in aesthetic judgment can only be subjective. Nevertheless, “the result is that the judgement of taste... must involve a claim to validity for all men” (Kant 2007, §6, 43).

But how can a man know which arguments are valid or not? Kant would like to convince us that “The judgement of taste rests on *a priori* grounds” (Kant, §12, 53). But he is aware that it is absolutely impossible “to determine *a priori* the connection of the feeling of a pleasure or displeasure”, for that would be a causal relation” (Kant, §12, 53). “This pleasure is also in no way practical, neither resembling that from the pathological ground of agreeableness nor that from the intellectual ground of the represented good” (Kant, §12, 53). The only possible solution is to find such a pleasure in aesthetic judgement that “is merely contemplative and does not bring about an interest in the object; (...) The consciousness of mere formal purposiveness in the play of the cognitive faculties of the subject attending a representation whereby an object is given, is the pleasure itself...” (Kant, §12, 53). The relationship between cognitive faculties in the aesthetic judgment, imagination and understanding, is spontaneous, playful and harmonious, and it regards only a form of an object.

Despite the playfulness of the subject's faculties, Kant emphasizes his main activity as a calm contemplation of an object: “We *dwell* on the contemplation of the beautiful because this contemplation strengthens and reproduces itself, (...) the mind all the while remaining passive” (Kant, §12, 54). However, we can still speak about “the active engagement of the cognitive powers”, but “without ulterior aim” (Kant, §12, 54). Kant must have wanted to emphasize that the subject in his aesthetic relationship towards nature doesn't have the intention of discovering and determining the objects, but rather wants to contemplate himself in his relation to nature. The aesthetic judgment is pure and formal, as long as it comes from the pure form of the object, resulting in a harmonious play between the imagination and the understanding; this play isn't primarily empiric, but rather transcendental, although directed towards empiric objects. The imagination and the understanding are in a specific relation to each other in the field of aesthetic judgment: not in a constitutive relation, but in a regulative one, and since it applies to all subjects, they can exchange judgments on the beautiful.

In this way, Kant creates conditions for the existence of some kind of intersubjectivity and empathy, which he calls *the community sense*. Aesthetic judgment must possess the subjective

principle, which determines what pleases and what does not through sensation and not through concept, although in a widely accepted manner. “Such a principle, however, could only be regarded as *common sense*. This differs essentially from common understanding, which is also sometimes called common sense (*sensus communis*): for the judgement of the latter is not one by feeling, but always one by concepts, though usually only in the shape of obscurely represented principles” (Kant, §20, 68). Through the community sense we co-create the ideal of beauty: it is based on empathy, on communication and finding consensus by all the subjects contemplating the objects in nature, judging them as beautiful.¹

Kant also attests a calm pleasure when contemplating the beautiful forms in a contrast comparison with judging a sublime in nature, when we feel very excited and agitated by its formless spectacles. The beautiful manifests a harmony of imagination and understanding while the sublime expresses a conflict of imagination and reason. “The mind feels itself *set in motion* in the representation of the sublime in nature; whereas in the aesthetic judgement upon what is beautiful therein it is in *restful* contemplation” (Kant, §27, 88). That’s why Kant doesn’t use the concept of contemplation in *Analytic of Sublime*.³

However, in the second part of *Critique of Judgement*, in *Critique of the Teleological Judgement*, Kant comes closer to the speculative use of the concept of contemplation. In § 67, he argues that from the teleological point of view “we may look upon” the beauty of nature as an objective purposiveness of nature, as if natural beauty is “an accordance of nature with the free play of our cognitive faculties engaged in grasping and judging its appearance”. Nevertheless, it is our teleological judgment forming this idea. It is also the reason why “we may love it, just as we view it with respect because of its immensity, and feel ourselves ennobled by such contemplation” (Kant, §67, 208). This manner of contemplation refines us, makes us better in a cultural sense. However, Kant’s argumentation remains at the level of “as if nature” had created so many beautiful forms “with the precise purpose in its mind” (Kant, §67, 208).

In contrast to *Critique of Teleological Judgement*, where Kant assumed that the correspondence of nature with our (cognitive) forces might be a good argument for objective purposiveness, in *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement*, the same argument was a proof of subjective purposiveness. He even rejects emotional causes as pathological ones. In *Analytic of the Beautiful*, he thinks beauty is the result of an accordance of the object with the free play of our cognitive forces (imagination and understanding) and its form as a subjective, formal purposiveness without purpose.² Beauty is not an objective attribute to the object, to its form, but rather displays a subjective relation of the subject towards it, something that affects us and provokes pleasure, thus inducing the subject to judge the object as being beautiful. From the point of view of his contemplation, the form of the object is purposeful only for the subject’s taste that is subjective. The objective purposiveness of objects and nature respectively is out of the question as far as aesthetic judgment goes. It takes no notice of what the purpose of the existence of natural beauty is: does it exist merely to evoke pleasure or is it as a purpose in no significant relationship with us.

On the contrary, considering teleological judgment, the question of objective purposiveness appears obviously there.

But with this additional explanation we are no closer to treating natural beauty as a proof of nature's objective purposiveness; by claiming it has a purpose for the subjective pleasure it evokes in us, we affirm that it is just about the subjective purposiveness of beauty, as a specific relationship with nature. It seems that Kant had decided to judge nature as *Ding an sich*, the essence of which lies primarily within the inability to reveal it or to say anything certain about it. The modality of his statement that we *may* look upon natural beauty as a manifestation of objective purposiveness of nature is in opposition to the unconditional essence of objective purposiveness. Beside that Kant also uses metaphorical language, through which he personifies nature by writing "that it has been disposed to promote our culture by exhibiting so many beautiful forms" (Kant, §67, 208). Furthermore, he surprises us with the approach he rejected in *Analytic of the Beautiful* as emotional and thus inappropriate for a pure aesthetic judgment, by saying that nature dispensed beauty and charms in such abundance, that for this we may love it and view it with respect. Mentioning the term respect brings us closer to Kant's moral arguments in his *Critique of Practical Reason*, while at the beginning of *Critique of Judgement* he rejects the possibility of relating a pure aesthetic judgment to the term of good. What does it mean that such contemplation makes us better? From teleological point of view contemplating nature helps us on our path to culture, i.e., through aesthetic cultivation, we become better and more beautiful on a spiritual level. This brings Kant much closer to understanding beauty as a symbol of good.

Kant also emphasizes his position in §86 (*Ethico-theology*), proposing an objective purposiveness of the world, otherwise contemplation would be senseless: it is not appropriate to say that the world has got its sense, value and purpose only through human's contemplation; on the contrary, contemplation has got its proper value and sense, because the world is sensible by itself.

Without man, in other words, the whole of creation would be a mere wilderness, a thing in vain, and have no final end. Yet it is not man's cognitive faculty, that is, theoretical reason, that forms the point of reference which alone gives its worth to the existence of all else in the world—as if the meaning of his presence in the world was that there might be someone in it that could make it an object of *contemplation*. For if this contemplation of the world brought to light nothing but things without a final end, the existence of the world could not acquire a worth from the fact of its being known. A final end of the world must be presupposed as that in relation to which the contemplation of the world may itself possess a worth. Neither is it in relation to the feeling of pleasure or the sum of such feelings that we can think that there is a given final end of creation, that is to say, it is not by well-being, not by enjoyment, whether bodily or mental, not, in a word, by happiness, that we value that absolute worth. For the fact that man, when he does exist, makes happiness his own final purpose, affords us no conception of any reason why he should exist at all, or of any worth he himself possesses, for which his existence should be made agreeable to him. Hence man must already be presupposed to be the final end of creation, in order that we may have a rational ground to explain

why nature, when regarded as an absolute whole according to principles of ends, must be in accord with the conditions of his happiness. (Kant, §86, 271)

At which point could we doubt Kant's thesis? Firstly, when he claims all creation would be empty desert without people, senseless and purposeless. If we follow Kant's theory of *Ding an sich*, this statement cannot be made, since we can't know, what it in itself really is, which means we can't know what would be, has it not been for us, humans. On the phenomenal level though, it is us who give purpose to the world, by discovering and valuing it in a certain way. It is obvious that Kant did not refer to humans when searching for something/somebody that gives them the final purpose.

It is possible to say that the world has sense in itself, mostly when speaking of the universe and nature, both of which would follow physical laws with or without us. But nature and universe in itself are not yet the world; this becomes a meaningful value only after we have invested it into nature and social relationships. In addition, when Kant says that it is not man's existence and cognitive ability (theoretical reason) what give value to the existence of everything else in the world, this particular thesis seems problematic, especially considering the fact that inside the phenomenal world evaluation and discovering are all that the subject is able to do.

Kant establishes that the pure contemplation of the world doesn't ensure seeing the world in the light of its final purpose. He doesn't dwell on the fact that subject's contemplation could have an immanent purpose and not an exterior, transcendent one. So, it is no coincidence that the quote discussed here would find its place in the chapter entitled *Ethico-theology*. In my opinion, contemplation keeps its vital importance despite leaving the question of the final purpose open or even dismissing it entirely: the purposiveness of the world, as well as the potential lack of it, has a sense in its own, which is something worth thinking about. This statement brings us closer to Kant's aesthetic vision of the subjective purposiveness without the objective purpose.

II.

In his work, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche*, Andrew Bowie assumes that philosophical claim for disinterestedness at the turn of 18th to 19th century was perhaps an echo of the growing tendency of the age towards usefulness and effectiveness.

Philosophical aesthetics of the time responds to the modern process of rationalisation by providing a reminder that there are other ways of seeing nature and human activity, apart from the instrumental views offered by the sciences and commerce. The central new idea is that the beauty of nature need not have an ulterior function and can be its own purpose. (...) Not surprisingly, in the light of the contemporary ecological crisis, the questions raised by aesthetics have come to seem more and more significant today. (Bowie 2003, 4-5)

We can admit that Kant's arguments in favour of contemplation as disinterested aesthetic judgment demonstrate his intention to protect the autonomy of aesthetic judgment. However, he

exposed them from the rationalistic perspective, not (yet) in the way of social and economic theory. Bowie also emphasizes

that the pleasure occasioned by the aesthetic object derives precisely from its allowing our cognitive faculties to *play* in a manner that does not entail determination by concepts, thus suggesting that the *ground* of cognition is an activity which, like play, can take place for its own sake. (Bowie 2003, 30).

However, Kant insisted, in the name of *sensus communis*, on searching for agreement of others for our subjective, particular pleasure, but in a rational form, through a judgement. This agreement is possible then not only on the base of pleasure, but rational judgement, too. Kant pointed up himself that contemplation of beauty was a judgement, not only a pleasure. The pleasure has to be disinterested also with the aim to facilitate the search of agreement, while an interest would disable it.

Regarding Kant's aim to link the harmony manifest in the aesthetic apprehension of natural objects with the idea of natural teleology, Bowie finds out that Kant

remains ambiguous whether such a link is merely a regulative idea or could actually be constitutive, tending more to the former conception. Such a strong conception of natural teleology may be hard to defend, but what interests Kant in this question will not simply go away, even if one rejects teleology out of hand as inappropriate for the explanation of natural products. (Bowie 2003, 32)

Andrew Bowie continues with saying that a tendency in the Enlightenment was to dominate nature, no matter what nature could "think" of this. In Western history, attention to natural beauty for its own sake generally arises at the moment when nature ceases to be perceived as predominantly a threat to human survival. The aesthetic concern with beauty in nature persists in modern, technologically developed society, too. It seems that a certain development stage is necessary in order to be able to appreciate nature as a pure object of contemplation. This goes with "the secularisation of nature, which had previously been seen in terms of its manifestation of the magnificence of God" (Bowie 2003, 33). Nevertheless, Bowie presumes that modern science will not succeed in breaking up completely with the mythical and the theological elements in our relationship to nature. He still recognizes some mythical ways of thinking in ecological movements.

Bowie also evokes a difference between Kant's and Hegel's position: Hegel insists, against Kant, that beauty in works of art has a higher status than natural beauty. His intention is also to undermine any kind of reliance on immediacy. Hegel, therefore, denies that there could be an immediate pleasurable contemplation of the natural world – natural beauty appears only as a reflection of beauty, belonging to the human spirit. Before the modern period, the beauty of landscapes was generally not a central focus of pictorial art and served either as mere background or as a source of symbols of God's creation. The idea that nature can be beautiful on itself emerges just in the middle of the 18th century in Europe. "The appreciation of wild nature for its own sake is

indeed predominantly a modern phenomenon, and landscape painting first emerges in a major way in a country, Holland, which is itself largely a result of human control of nature” (Bowie 2003, 167). Bowie considers as dangerous a position that the natural beauty could emerge only at a certain stage of human development (when a man was able to control nature). He considers that it affirms only human relationship to nature and thus opens the door to a dogmatic conception, such as suggested in Kant’s teleology of nature where beautiful forms seem to be created in order to please us. “However, the wholesale exclusion of what can be learned from the appreciation of natural beauty leads to an even more questionable impoverishment of thought that itself has evident public, political effects”, concludes Bowie (2003, 167).

As I explained before, in my opinion, Kant’s position is closer to a constitutive idea of nature than to a regulative one, but he tried to avoid the danger of affirming it dogmatically. He also succeeded to overcome a narrow Enlightenment’s effort to dominate nature. The very concept of contemplation assumes that in the aesthetic and teleological field, at least, we are no longer supposed to impinge on nature, to transform it, but only to contemplate it as it is on itself. Even though contemplation manifests a passive attitude, we feel engaged in aesthetic judgement. This could have some positive moral consequences: by simply contemplating nature we let it be as it is, without falling into dogmatic (mythical or teleological) treatise of nature. It does not mean to relapse in immediacy from which Hegel warned us while we are aware of all aspects of our historical relationship towards nature.

Emily Brady also analyses in her book *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy* the connection between religious ideas and a metaphysical demonstration of God through nature. She argues that God’s Epiphany relied on the notion of sublimity, not of beauty. Shaftesbury, for example, who wrote his aesthetics of nature after an expedition across the Alps in 1686, had been fascinated when contemplating the sublimity of “all Nature’s wonders, served to excite and perfect the idea of their author” and to demonstrate man’s fragility. Addison also emphasized the contemplation of God’s greatness. Later, in the 18th century, these religious references left place to the sublimity of nature itself, examined in more secular aesthetics. “Also within theological discussions of the time a strong reverence for nature emerges, (...) making way for the nature worship of Romanticism” (Brady 2013, 38-39). I think that Kant was probably in between the teleological reverence for nature and its admiration for its own sake. Unlike his predecessors (with the exception of Edmund Burke), he strongly differentiated between the beautiful in nature, contemplated restfully, and the sublime provoking both exaltation and anxiety of the spirit.

In a book *Environment and Philosophy*, Pratt Vernon and Jane Howarth, together with Emily Brady, expose a critique of Kant’s aesthetics of nature in contemporary aesthetics, for example in aesthetics of engagement of A. Berleant, who was as inspired, as opposed to phenomenology and pragmatism. They explain his thesis that in *Critique of Judgement* nature was appreciated as an object from the perspective of a disembodied, contemplative appreciator. In one important respect, though, the phenomenological approach harks back to Kant, in that it

emphasises the immediacy of perception and feeling in the aesthetic response. But disinterestedness, which in part facilitates the unmediated nature of the aesthetic response for Kant, has no place in this approach. Instead, this approach assumes fullness of participation. (Vernon, Howarth, Brady 2000, 150)

They present Berleant's own aesthetic approach to nature and environment:

Perceiving environment from within, as it were, looking not *at* it, but *in* it, nature becomes something quite different; it is transformed into a realm in which we live as participants, not observers... The aesthetic mark of all such times is not disinterested contemplation but total engagement, a sensory immersion in the natural world that reaches the still uncommon experience of unity. (Vernon, Howarth, Brady 2000, 150)

They consider that "Berleant's aesthetics of engagement values activity rather than passivity, involvement rather than distancing. (...) In the move away from a traditional or modernist aesthetic, engagement is accompanied by attention to the context or situation of the appreciator" (Vernon, Howarth, Brady 2000, 150). Here is no place for a notion of subject, but for an individual appreciator who does not only judges but feels all "emotions, values, beliefs and memories" which "become as important as the object of aesthetic attention" (Vernon, Howarth, Brady 2000, 150). Also, nature has ceased to be an abstract concept and thereby transformed into the natural environment we participate in. Before Kant's theory emphasized only a feeling of delight or enjoyment, pleasure or displeasure, but this position is too narrow for an aesthetics of engagement demanding a fully emotional participation in the natural environment.

Arnold Berleant himself emphasizes in his work *Art and Engagement* that "experience is the central term in aesthetics, and all that we can say about art and the aesthetic is in some way an elaboration of this notion." However, he would like to "escape the prevalent tendency to regard it as a purely subjective event, a tendency that emerges in phenomenology as strongly as in traditional empiricism." Berleant points out that traditional aesthetics belonged to "dualistic division between person and world. Yet this dualistic tradition of separating consciousness from an external world, so deeply ingrained in modern thought, cannot be assumed as given" (Berleant 1991, 14).

Very critical towards Kant's aesthetic of nature is also Katya Mandoki in her work *Everyday Aesthetics*. She argues that by applying categories like "the autonomy of art" and "distanced contemplation", mainstream aesthetics separates the aesthetics from ordinary life and art from reality, often with strongly religious hues. She also returns to the history of aesthetics, finding out that the idea of aesthetic disinterest had already appeared in Shaftesbury and Hume as a reaction against 'bourgeois' egotism and coarse instrumentality. It was consolidated then precisely with Kant's *Critique of Judgement*. Kant, as Shaftesbury and Hume, instituted the concept of "disinterest" to prevent "tarnishing" the judgment of beauty with worldly preoccupations and to differentiate aesthetic delight (as disinterested) from the delight in the good or the agreeable

(considered as interested). It is necessary to recognize, however, continues K. Mandoki, that if the concept of “disinterested delight” would hold, it should encompass as well the delight in the good, and in the agreeable. In other words, it is possible to feel “disinterested delight” not only in beauty but also in an agreeable conversation or a kind deed.

Additionally, one must admit, no matter how shameful, that there can be “disinterested delight” in evil when it is enjoyed for its own sake alone, since human beings are capable of disinterest in the Kantian sense not only with regard to beauty but also to ugliness and depravity. We can’t take the easy way out of dismissing these real cases on the ground that they are immoral. We are aestheticians, not moralists, and it is our duty to understand them, even if morally repugnant, or rather precisely because of it. In any case, it is not so easy to differentiate objects that provide disinterested delight from those of interested delight, as Kant pretended. (Mandoki 2007, 17-18)

As Emily Brady, Katya Mandoki also favorites the position of Arnold Berleant and his use of term engagement or focused attention as an alternative to the theory of disinterestedness.

Andrew Bowie outlines strong circumstances and reasons for the emergence of Kant’s aesthetics of nature, not only from philosophical but also from historical and social perspectives. However, he does not neglect the importance of cognition in Kant’s explanation of the way we contemplate the beautiful. Contemplation is not an immediate pleasure but mediated by judgment. But it has no historical insight, as distinct from later Hegel’s position. I think that aesthetics of engagement and everyday aesthetics do not formulate their criticism of Kant’s theory by following properly his theory of the meaning of cognition, even in aesthetics. Kant tried to understand and to explain the conditions under which it is possible to feel pleasure and displeasure, to contemplate natural objects and to make our (aesthetic) judgments. Pleasure and displeasure are the general ways of feeling which do not exclude any other particular feelings. On the contrary, all the feelings may participate in the aesthetic judgment. It is true that Kant did not expose the body, but he neither did exclude it; contemplation is not disembodied, because the subject cannot sense, perceive, feel and contemplate without his body, and is thus oriented to the subjective and empirical experience. It is rooted in our faculties (understanding, imagination). Contemplation inevitably includes a context or situation of the subject who judges a natural object from the aesthetic point of view. It is not enough to say that we are engaged in aesthetic experience: first, philosophy has to think, as Kant did, how our cognition comes to it.

Endnotes

1. Éliane Escoubas, French philosopher, assumes, that Kant’s contemplative aesthetics is only aesthetics of the beautiful, especially in nature, not in art. For that reason, it is not sufficient to explain artistic creation. A contemplator is a man of taste, while a creator is a genius (Escoubas 2003, 86). Genius is original, because he doesn’t create by the rules, determined in advance, and he is exemplary, because his artworks must be an exemplar for others. If genius doesn’t know the rules, he is not able to explain how he came to his art works. That’s why we still need a

contemplator who will judge them, concludes Escoubas. I would like to add that since Romanticism philosophers and artists were no longer satisfied with contemplative aesthetics. Friedrich Nietzsche wanted to develop his aesthetics from the perspective of genius himself, from a perspective of creation and no more that of contemplation.

2. "Beauty is the form of purposiveness in an object, so far as this is perceived in it apart from the representation of an end" (Kant 2007, §17, 66).
3. Even though contemplation is connected with calmness, restfulness and serenity, while sublime provokes anxiety, displeasure and delight, too, we can doubt whether it is appropriate to treat contemplation and sublime so strictly apart? For example, paintings of Caspar David Friedrich provoke a deep contemplation, because they are beautiful by form but sublime by metaphysical content (the smallness of man in front of nature, the endless horizons of the sky and the sea, longing for transcendence, fear of death, passing, ruination, and so on). From this point of view, Kant's limitation of contemplation to the *Analytic of Beautiful* seems too narrow.

References

- Berleant, Arnold: *Art and Engagement*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991.
- Bowie, Andrew. *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003.
- Brady, Emily. *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics and Nature*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Escoubas, Éliane. *L'Ésthetique (The Aesthetics)*. Paris: Ellipses Édition Marketing S.A., 2003.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Mandoki, Katya. *Everyday Aesthetics. Prosaics, The Play of culture, and Social Identities*. Hampshire and Burlington: Ashgate, 2007.
- Pratt Vernon, Jane Howarth, Emily Brady: *Environment and Philosophy*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000.